

How To Grow Dahlias - [click here to download a printable pdf of this page](#)

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When to Plant

For best results, dahlias should be planted from mid April through May for most areas. Ground temperature approx. 60 degrees. (exceptions will be hot climates). In general about the same time you would plant your vegetable garden.

Where to Plant

Dahlias need a sunny location to thrive. An area that receives at least 8 hours of direct sunlight is best.



Exception for hot climates, they will need morning sunlight, afternoon shade.

Soil Preparation

Ground should be warm, well drained at planting, and in an open, sunny location. If you have a heavier soil, add in sand, peat moss or bagged steer manure to lighten and loosen the soil texture for better drainage. Bone meal is ideal at planting time, put a small handful in the hole and work in well before planting tuber. PH level of your soil should be 6.5 - 7, slightly acidic. Do not amend dahlia beds with purchased top soils unless you are sure that it has not been treated in any way for weeds.

Watering

Most areas have enough rain to fill dahlia water needs until the sprouts appear above the ground. After dahlias are established, a deep watering 1-2 times a week is necessary during warmer, dryer weather. Hotter climates will need to water more often as conditions require. Proper watering promotes better blooming.

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Fertilizer

Dahlias require a low nitrogen fertilizer, such as used for vegetables. We recommend high percentage potassium and phosphorous fertilizers such as a 5-10-10, 10-20-20, or 0-20-20. First applications should be within 30 days of planting and repeated again approx. 3-4 weeks later. One of the biggest mistakes made with dahlias is over feeding them. Avoid Compost, Fish fertilizers, and high nitrogen water soluble types as they promote weak stems, small blooms, or no blooms, and tubers that rot or shrivel in storage.



Topping or Pinching

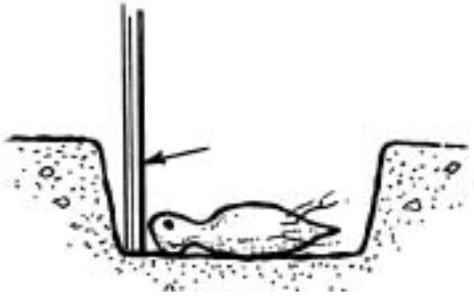
To promote shorter, bushier plants with better stems for cutting, pinch or cut the center shoot just above the third set of leaves, or plant height of about 18- 20" tall.

Cut Flowers

Best time to cut your flowers is in the cool mornings. Place the cut stems in 2 - 3" of VERY HOT WATER (approx. 160-180 degrees) and allow to cool at least one hour. This will set your blooms and make your

flowers last for 4 - 6 days. Removing old blooms will keep your plants strong and blooming late into the season.

Planting



Lay the tuber horizontally 4-6" deep. About 18" to 24" apart.

DO NOT WATER TUBERS AFTER PLANTING!!

Please wait to water until the sprouts have appeared above the ground. The exception will be in hot climates, where they should be watered very lightly. Do not use bark dust or mulch to cover dahlias, as it does not allow the soil to warm up or tubers to sprout properly. This is a good time to apply snail and slug bait to protect the new sprouts.

Weed Control

Hand weeding is the only type of weed control you should ever use, there are no exceptions. Do not use any type of Herbicides, your dahlias will not survive.

Pests & Problems



SNAILS & SLUGS Slug bait throughout the season.



SPIDER MITES Malathion, Mitex, Bon-Neem, or any spray that lists them. (appear mostly in hot weather)

EARWIGS & CUCUMBER BEETLE Sevin



MOST INSECTS Orthene, Malathion, or Bon-Neem.

These are a few of the sprays available. A good spraying program is the best preventative, which should

begin the end of June and continue through August. Check with your local garden centers for availability or other brands that will work.

Digging

Digging should be done about 2 weeks after a killing frost, the plants will turn brown if frosted hard enough. Tubers dug too early are still "green" and will not store. It is safe to dig by Mid November without a frost. Cut the stalk off to about 6", gently lift tubers with a spade or pitchfork carefully so as not to break the necks. Wash dirt from the roots and allow to air dry, protected from the elements for about 24 hours.

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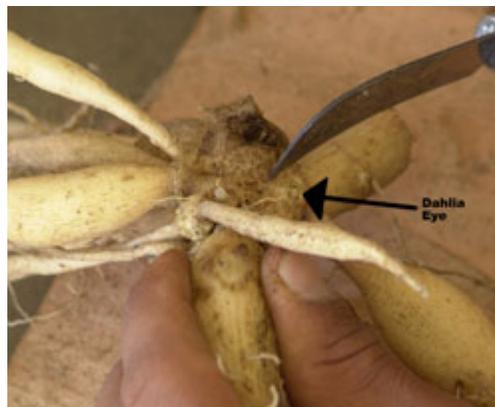
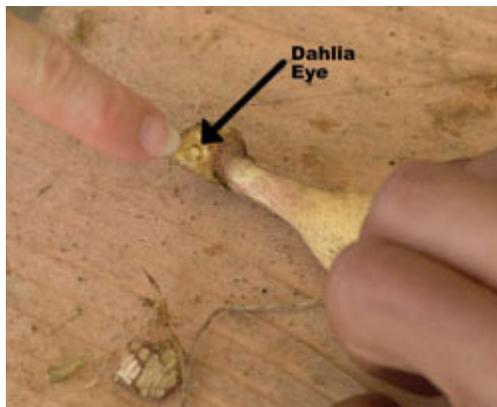
Winter Storage

Use a storage medium such as slightly dampened Peat Moss, Sand, or Pet bedding material (sawdust/shavings). Tubers should be stored in crates or cardboard boxes. We recommend lining the containers with 10-12 sheets of newspaper. Start with your packing medium in the bottom and layer tubers and medium until the container is full. Never store in sealed plastic bags or plastic containers. Store in a cool, dry area (temp. of 40-50 degrees). Too warm they will wrinkle/shrivel and too cold they will freeze/rot. Please check your tubers once a month throughout the winter months.



Dividing

Can be done in the fall, or in the spring. If eyes are difficult to see, we suggest dividing the clump into halves or quarters. Use a hawk bill shoe knife (available pg. 62 of our catalog) or sharp knife to cut through the tubers. The eyes will be located on the center stalk and each root must have an eye in order to grow. Not all tubers will have an eye. Cut surfaces should be allowed to dry overnight before storing, or planting. Different varieties will produce different sizes and shape tubers.



Starting Dahlias Early Indoors

Potting soil or sand is recommended as a planting medium. Start your dahlias approx. 6 weeks before you transplant them out. Plant 2-3" deep. Keep in a warm area above 60 degrees. The soil should be **slightly damp, not wet!** (Dahlias can rot or develop poorly in too wet of conditions) Transplant your dahlias out in your beds after danger of frost is past. The ground temperature should be approx. 60 degrees. Plants should be about 12" tall or less when you move them outdoors. If the plants are over 12" high, pinch

one week) Once your dahlias are established, care for your dahlias as you would with tubers planted directly in the ground.

Growing Dahlias In Containers

The minimum container size is 12" deep by 12" in diameter. Please remember the larger the variety of dahlia, the larger the container needed. Varieties over 3 feet tall should be put in larger containers. The ideal planting medium is 1/3 potting soil and 2/3 garden soil.

Potting soil alone is too porous for dahlias and dries out too quickly, which can result in poor bud formation. Plant the dahlia tuber about 6" deep. Use a handful of bone meal mixed well into the planting medium in each container. Water sparingly when the tubers are first planted. The soil should be slightly damp, not soaked. After the tubers have sprouted above the soil, they will need more water. Water them deeply, 2 or 3 times per week, depending on weather. Fertilize them every 2 weeks from June – September with a low nitrogen fertilizer. Please, refer to the regular growing instructions for continued care for your dahlias.

Growing Dahlias From Seed

Growing dahlias from seed can be fun! Mixed seed will produce all kinds of flowers in an array of colors. Start by spreading potting soil mix in a low, flat tray. Potting soil can be purchased at any garden center. Sprinkle your dahlia seed over the top of the soil. Then lightly cover with potting soil. Lightly water so that soil is just damp, and continue to water lightly keeping the soil damp during sprouting. Sprouting should occur within a 7 to 10 day period. **Do not over water.** Keep in mind that unlike vegetable seed, dahlia seed will not all sprout the same day, germination will occur over several days. After the young seedlings have reached a height of approximately 3 inches, they will be ready to separate and transplant into small "plugs" or pots. These containers should be filled with a potting soil and sand mix, approximately 2/3 potting soil and 1/3 sand. After potting up the seedlings, water enough to keep the soil dampened while they take root. Continue to water and keep the soil damp as the plants grow. The seedlings will stay in these containers and continue to grow for about 4 to 5 weeks before they are ready for transplanting outside. Before you transplant outside, it is recommended that you harden off the young seedling first. They should be moved into a cold frame or the trays can be set outside during the day and brought in at night for a period of about 7 to 10 days. This will help condition the young seedlings and they will and they will go through less shock when transplanted. Pick a sunny location that has well drained soil to transplant to. After transplanting your dahlias into your beds, be sure to keep them watered until the roots are established. (Approximate time 1-2 weeks) Please refer to the regular growing instructions for continued care for your dahlias.

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